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ABSTRACT

Economic and demographic changes have affected Cooperative Extension programing. At its inception, extension's primary clientele were rural community members in production agriculture. Although extension has been urbanized, it remains agricultural. Recent declines in farm numbers are due to economic distress, environmental concern, the energy crisis, and technological change. A report of the Futures Task Force emphasizes changes that extension must make to enhance its credibility, its relevance to potential audiences, and the teacher-learner relationship. The vision for extension's future includes the following components: a major shift in its organization and structure; a strong regional structure and joint interstate/multistate programs; cooperative work with state departments and agencies; and the disappearance of county offices. Future support of extension relies on issues programming: how critical issues can be addressed effectively. (Four tables and 24 references are included.) (NLA)

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROGRAMMING: A VISION FOR THE YEAR 2000

A Paper Presented at
the National Conference of the
American Association for Adult & Continuing Education

by

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"All is flux, nothing stays still." "Nothing endures but change." Heraclitus (540-480 B.C.)

When established in 1914, Extension was intended to be an agency of change; to extend land grant institution resources and learning opportunities to persons who might not otherwise have access to them. The Smith-Lever Act defined Extension work to be "...the giving of instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending or resident in..." land grant universities. (True, 1928)

There was CHANGE and Extension added new dimensions to its efforts. Subsequent amendments to the Smith-Lever Act, as well as provisos in other federal laws (the 1981 Farm Bill is an example), enlarged the audiences Extension is expected to serve as well as the nature and scope of its programs and responsibilities. Over time Extension has charted new directions for its programming. Some of the more recent changes have sparked discussion both within and outside of Extension.

Adjustment has not been easy; there has been considerable debate over initiatives vs issues vs core programs. While these debates continue, Extension also is attempting to project still further redirection to carry the organization past the dawn of the 2lst century.

PURPOSE

My purpose in this paper is to examine some of the changes that have affected Extension especially during the past few years and explore some of the directions in which we seem to be moving. Extension ostensibly has been moving forward proactively, but I believe that for much of the past decade Extension has been in primarily a defensive posture. There are several reasons for this. Its programs have come into question and its support has eroded both with its audiences and Capitol Hill.

True, budgets during the past couple of years have been positive, but virtually all these funds have been earmarked for special programs. At least some of Extension's efforts to regain control of its own destinies, well-intentioned though they were, may have been less than fully productive. Finally, I will contend that while Extension has undergone considerable change...and continues to undergo change...more substantive changes are going to be needed as we move toward the start of the 21st century.

THE PREMISE

If we subscribe to the notion that the alternative to change is stagnation, obsolescence, or - in the extreme - the demise of an organization, then change is good. But the change process raises several critical questions. Is the change proactive or reactive? Is the organization moving in a new direction that is consistent with its stated mission? Is the mission still important or does it too need to be changed? What is happening to the organization as a result of change? How will change affect the people the organization professes to serve? Will the cohort be larger...smaller...or about the

same? Will it be the same cohort or a different one? What are the implications of change for the structure of the organization...staffing...finance...operations? These are just a few of the questions embedded in the concept of organizational change.

Of the many changes which have come about over time that have affected Extension, some have been the outcome of Extension program efforts. In other cases, there have been wholesale changes in the social, economic and technological parameters within which Extension operates. In some cases Extension has been able to exercise a degree of control over the changes that have come about; in other cases - especially in the last decade or so - it has not had full control. One example of change beyond Extension's control is its audience.

At its inception, Extension's primary audience or clientele was people in rural communities who were involved in production agriculture. While there has been considerable "urbanization" of Extension (e.g. in 4-H), the cornerstone of the organization remains solidly agricultural. Those audience numbers are small and likely to continue to shrink. Most recent estimates place the farm population at fractionally less than two percent of the nation's population. Statistics from my home state, Nebraska, are probably representative of the situation in most Farm Belt states. There were 65,000 farms in Nebraska in 1980, according to a report issued early this spring by the Nebraska Agricultural Statistical Service. At the end of 1990 that number had declined to 57,000, a drop of approximately 12%. Concurrently, average farm size increased from 734 acres to 826 acres, an increase of nearly 13% (Nebraska Agri-Facts, 1991).

Admittedly a large part of the recent decline in farm numbers can be attributed to the financial exigencies of the 80s that saw scores of Farm Belt producers as well as financial institutions throughout the nation going bankrupt. But decline in farm population is an ongoing phenomenon that has been especially prominent since the end of World War II.

Many trends and developments could be cited that have affected Extension and its programming. A few examples from relatively recent memory would include: the emergence in the 1960s of concern for the environment...the energy crisis of the 1970s...the dizzying explosion of technology especially in the last decade...the farm financial crisis of the mid 80s.

CES itself has documented the internal effects of the winds of change over time in a series of evaluative studies dating from 1948. One of the long-term trends, noted by both Ratchford (1984) and Forest (1989), was that Extension gradually expanded the scope of its programs substantially beyond traditional boundaries and aggressively worked to expand its program base in urban areas. Extension was moving in consonance with a certain "vision."

Whenever you take on new activities in one area, something else generally has to be reduced in another; there are "trade-offs." Predictably, considerable controversy arose over a host of related issues: what Extension's mission should be, where Extension was placing its priorities, its program evaluation and accountability. Not everyone was sharing the same vision. The controversy peaked during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Extension came under a considerable amount of pressure from various directions. The White House was one such pressure source. It is well documented that Extension was not a particularly popular budget item with either the Carter or Reagan administrations and their budget recommendations were commensurate with that attitude. They asked, in essence, "Do we really need an Extension system?" Extension itself had to orchestrate the affirmative response, organizing letter and phone call campaigns to federal lawmakers.

Pressure also came from the General Accounting Office in an August 1981 report entitled "Cooperative Extension Service's Mission and Federal Role Need Clarification." This report was highly critical of the scope of Extension programs and urged Congress both to require updating of Extension's mission statement and to hold hearings to review Extension's programs. As part of its conclusion the GAO said,

> "If the Extension Service is to be a socially oriented organization with broad educational objectives, then changes may have to be made to its basic funding formulas and organizational structure. On the other hand, if its mission is to be limited to more traditional focuses, then the scope of its programming may have to be reduced." (GAO,1981)

Clearly here we had another vision of what Extension should be, one that was shaped by a set of fixed expectations.

The sentiments of the GAO vis a vis Extension were echoed strongly by farm organizations and commodity groups. They argued that Extension was established to serve agriculture, ergo that's where Extension's programs should remain focused.

Time may have passed, but the logic of the argument is unchanged. The editor of Hoard's Dairyman early this year complained pointedly about "...federal extension administrators and their disciples (who) are determined to get extension out of agriculture and into 'societal issues.'

"We're not against social programs," the editorial said, "but there already are more than enough state and federal agencies for them. Besides, the way to improve food safety and water quality, and even help youth at risk is to keep agriculture and rural communities strong, something the extension service has done exceptionally well for 75 years." (Hoard's, 1991)

During the 1980s Extension was clearly in an unenviable situation largely because of conflicting "visions" of what the organization should be and do. Not only was it having to justify its programs and priorities, its very existence was in jeopardy as well! Definitive response was obviously in order, and several steps were taken:

- The Secretary of Agriculture and the president of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) convened a joint study committee to scrutinize Extension.

- The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) impaneled a "Futures Task Force" to examine the federal-state-county relationship within Extension, the need for organizational and structural changes, and the program delivery process. (TF, 1987).

- Extension fielded the concept of issues and initiative programming.

Each of these events warrants a brief retrospective glance because it is part of the framework that defines Extension as an organization and its programming. Collectively they are pieces of the foundation on which any realistic vision of Extension's future must ultimately rest.

EXTENSION VISIONS UNFOLDED

The Joint Study Committee was charged with producing a report that would serve as a "guide for the future mission, scope, priorities and policies" of Extension. The committee produced a report in May 1983 entitled "Extension in the 80s: A Perspective for the Future of the Cooperative Extension Service."

The report is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it paved the way for Extension's subsequent shift to initiative and issue-based program. It listed 16 "societal changes" ("trends" would have been an equally applicable term) that were credited with prompting a reevaluation of Extension programming. It also identified six priority program areas. Four of those six are closely aligned to the topics that emerged three years later as the first priority initiatives. Though worded slightly differently, all but one of them, "International Concerns," are among Extension's base, or core, programs.

Predictably, the committee affirmed "...the value and the need for the land-grant system, including Cooperative Extension." (p. 5) In one of the few self-deprecating statements in the report the committee said "Extension must better understand what others expect of it. The Cooperative Extension Service has not done an adequate job of reporting to or relating with the general public or state, county and national decision-makers." (p. 23) In one respect at least the report is a testimonial to the accuracy of that statement. Despite calls by GAO and others for a narrowly defined mission, the committee made a point of stating broadly that Extension's mission "...is to disseminate, and encourage the application of, research-generated knowledge and leadership techniques to individuals, families and communities." (p. 7)

Renewed pressure from Capitol Hill came in a special report issued by the Office of Technology Assessment shortly after passage of the 1985 Farm Bill (OTA, 1986). One section of that report (Chapter 12) is entitled "Impacts on Agricultural Research and Extension Policy." The OTA analysis of Extension is far from flattering. Like the GAO four years before them, OTA criticizes Extension for failing to limit "its role and coverage" and for trying "...to be everything to everybody particularly in times of limited resources." (p. 263)

Shortcomings perceived by OTA included: inadequate ability of extension to influence Experiment Station research (p. 261), the need for extension to have a larger role in applied research (p. 262), reductions in force at the specialist level despite a need "for an increased emphasis on specialist staff" (pp 269-70), the need for technology generation and transfer to "small and moderate farms" in contrast to large-scale operations (p. 279).

Having been both criticized from the Hill, and threatened by White House budget cut proposals, Extension needed proactive, positive actions. The six years since have

framed a sequence of actions and activities as Extension has sought to respond to continuing pressures and set a programming and policy course that might carry the organization through the 1990s. A partial list:

-1986: Extension launches National Initiatives programming.
-November, 1986: ECOP appoints Futures Task Force
-1987: Revisions of National Initiatives program documents are sent to the field.
-November, 1987: Futures Task Force completes its report.
-January, 1988: Extension fields "Focus on Issues" document.
-November 1988: ECOP approves draft report "Implementation of the New Direction for the Cooperative Extension System and Transition of the ECOP Structure."
-November, 1989: ES-USDA and ECOP publish "New Directions for a New Decade," providing a major overhaul of National Initiatives programming and ECOP committee structure. A follow-up publication, "Strategic Directions of the Cooperative Extension System," is released in January, 1990.

If the purpose of a task force report is to kindle discussion, then the report of the Futures Task Force was an admirable success. Convened in 1986, the task force was asked to examine the federal-state-county partnership of Extension, the need for organizational and structural changes, and the program delivery process. Virginia's Mitchell R. Geasler chaired the Task Force and was chief architect of its report: "Extension in Transition: Bridging the Gap Between Vision and Reality" (Extension in Transition, 1987). In the light of subsequent events that title was particularly appropo. The "gap" seems to have been wider that anyone realized, and the "bridging" has yet to be fully anchored.

On the positive side of the ledger, the task force concluded that Extension contributes to the economic viability of American agriculture, makes a positive impact on program participants, provides nonbiased information and is responsive to clientele. Conversely, the system was faulted for: protecting the status quo, being reactive rather than proactive, having too many resources in permanent staff, conducting programs lacking a research base, allowing college alliances to limit its knowledge base, having a limited program delivery potential, and lacking "clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of each of the three primary partners." (p. 1)

The 32 recommendations that comprise the task force report are deceptively alluring. On the one hand, they can be viewed as laying a firm foundation for issues oriented programming. As you will recall, the task force recommended restating Extension's mission, using identified issues as a basis for targeting audiences and making key decisions, organizing issue-response teams at all levels of the organization, and drawing on a broader range of institutional resources as a basis for program development.

From another perspective, however, there is a disturbing number of non sequiturs in the recommendations. Henderson (1988) points out many of them. It might be argued that the task force report is fundamentally an exercise in organizational maintenance supporting one of the "realities" for which Extension was faulted - protection of the status quo. The underlying assumptions embedded within the recommendations would tend to support this contention. There is essentially no discernible emphasis on

empowering clientele/learners to gather information on their own from whatever source and utilize it in their daily lives. Rather, the emphasis is on changes that Extension must make to enhance its credibility, its relevancy with potential audiences and ultimately enhance the teacher (Extension)-learner (clientele) relationship.

Despite the obvious shortcoming of the "Extension in Transition" report, it is with that vision that Extension has moved forward toward the reality of issues programming.

SHAPING A NEW VISION

Concurrent with the workings of the futures task force, Extension was implementing its initiatives programming. It was a process marked by a rapid succession of changes which tended to detract from the potential effectiveness of that program approach. As initially fielded, there were eight national priority initiatives (Table 1).

The first change came in 1987 as ES made revisions in the scope and focus of the individual initiative areas. The following year there were multiple changes as a series of Priority Initiative-related publications appeared. First into the field (January 1988) was "Focus on Issues," which provided a mechanism for integrating emerging issues into the recipe for Initiative programming.

In October came "Strategic Planning: Issue Identification and Development for the Cooperative Extension System." This publication delineated the Strategic Planning Council's role in identifying emerging issues and recommending them to ES and ECOP for consideration as national initiatives. That process is pivotal, and we will return to this point shortly.

According to the aforementioned brochures, Extension was "contemporary... visionary...progressive." The degree to which this glowing rhetoric was being "bought" by Extension is conjectural. A document prepared in mid-November 1988 for ECOP would suggest it was not. Rather, deep concern and frustration is evident in the anonymous paper, titled "Implementation of the New Directions for the Cooperative Extension System and Transition of the ECOP Structure."

Table 1

Initial National Priority Issues

- Alternative Agricultural Opportunities
- Building Human Capital
- Competitiveness and Profitability of American Agriculture
- Conservation and Management of Natural Resources
- Family and Economic Well-Being
- Improving Nutrition, Diet and Health
- Revitalizing Rural America
- Water Quality

"During the past several years, the most challenging problem facing the leadership of the Cooperative Extension System has been similar to that facing much of higher education -- how to prevent the Extension System from becoming so lethargic, so cautious, so lacking in vision that it becomes inconsequential and irrelevant.

"How can we prevent the gap between the Cooperative Extension System and what is happening in the outside world from becoming so great that we will no longer even be criticized, but simply ignored?" (ECOP, 1988)

The purpose of the document was to provide a blueprint for mobilizing commitment, with particular emphasis on Extension professionals, to the "new directions" then in the planning stage.

Just a year later, in November 1989, ES and ECOP published the "New Directions for a New Decade" report. Released scarcely more than three years after the Initiative concept was fielded, the report reveals outlines for a comprehensive overhaul of the National Initiatives. Five were continued or refocussed, four were reidentified as "core" programs, and two were identified "...for potential future National Initiative status." (p 2) (Table 2) (At this point there were nine initiatives after the addition of "Youth at Risk.")

The same report also includes both Extension's revised mission statement and its "vision." The mission statement is more an assertion than a mission statement in the traditional sense: "The Cooperative Extension System helps people improve their lives through an educational process that uses scientific knowledge focused on issues and needs." The "vision" is glowingly positive: "The Cooperative Extension System is a future-oriented, self-renewing, national educational network providing excellence in programs that focus on contemporary issues and needs of people." (ES/ECOP, 1989)

Table 2

National Initiatives
- Water Quality
- Revitalizing Rural America
- Youth at Risk
- Improving Nutrition, Diet and Health
- Competitiveness of American Agriculture

Core Programs
- Alternative Agricultural Opportunities
- Building Human Capital
- Conservation and Management of Natural Resources
- Family and Economic Well-Being

Emerging Issues
- Waste Management
- Global Climate Change

Clearly, Extension's expectations on National Initiatives programming were not being - or had not been - met. Change was the order of the day.

Senior Extension and ECOP leaders had input into those changes. The SPC had surveyed these groups in May 1989 asking opinions on the capacity of Extension to respond to initiatives programming, actual or potential impacts, the number of initiatives they felt CES could support, and other related matters. It was a study that in reality probably should have been done BEFORE the initiatives programming concept was ever implemented. It is arguably true that "You don't know if it will work until you try it;" however, it can also be argued that Extension would be much further ahead if the programmatic turbulence that accompanied the initiatives reorganization could have been avoided.

An Extension professional reading "New Directions" could not have known that even before that document was published, ES-USDA and ECOP (on October 25, 1989) had approved new national initiatives and base programs. University of Nebraska-Lincoln unit administrators learned of the change on January 10, 1990 when Extension Dean and Director Kenneth R. Bolen forwarded copies of a document entitled "Strategic Directions of the Cooperative Extension System" (1990). The programs appearing on each list are shown in Table 3.

Developed at the University of Minnesota, the publication appears to have been intended as much or more for an external audience as it was for consumption by Extension professionals. The heart of the document is a discussion that attempts to explain the conceptual framework for Extension programming, differentiate between base (core) programs and national initiatives, and explain the initiatives development process.

Table 3

National Initiatives
- Food Safety and Quality
- International Marketing
- Revitalizing Rural America
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Waste Management
- Water Quality
- Youth at Risk

Base Programs
- Agricultural Competitiveness and Profitability
- Community Resource and Economic Development
- Natural Resources and Environmental Management
- Family and Economic Well-Being
- Leadership and Volunteer Development
- Nutrition, Diet and Health
- 4-H and Youth Development

Additional detail on a "Conceptual Framework for Cooperative Extension Programming" was outlined in an August 1990 publication bearing that title.

A fair question at this point is, "So, what?" Every organization issues reports. True...it's the content of those reports and the nature of related events that is bothersome. I think you could liken it to being handed half a glass of water. From one perspective, it's half full; from another, it's half empty. Thus, one might say of Extension's situation that we simply have an organization dealing with the uncertainties arising out of rapid, pervasive change in the world around us. The organization was simply seizing opportunities to adjust and remain relevant for our audiences (Rauschkolb, 1988). From the opposite perspective, it might be said that there is considerable uncertainty within the organization about what it should be doing, it is trying to be "too many things for too many people," it doesn't have a clear vision for the future. As I've already noted, we have representatives of both viewpoints within Extension.

THE FUTURING PANELS

A fact that becomes quickly evident in reading Extension's program-related publications of the last couple of years is the pivotal role played by the Strategic Planning Council in the formation of national initiatives. The SPC is a "filter" of sorts receiving inputs from several sources. Our concern, for purposes of this discussion, is with only one of those sources - the Futuring Panel.

The role of the Futuring Panel , as described in Extension's Strategic Planning brochure, is to:

- identify broad societal issues that are likely to arise in the future;
- project how these issues might be address through educational programs; and
- provide the SPC with a list of credible potential issues.

Four "Futuring Panels" have been convened during the past two years or so - the most recent was April 23-24, 1991. Members of the panels represented a broad range of constituencies. The job of each panel was to provide insights, opinions and observations as opposed to making predictions about the future or suggesting priorities for Extension. Before proceeding to examine the outcomes of the panels, we need to recall the criteria for initiative status that are applied by ES-USDA and ECOP. There are 15, spelled out in Appendix II of "New Directions for a New Decade." Those criteria are listed in Table 4.

With these criteria as the presumptive basis for selecting new initiatives and reviewing existing ones, let us now turn to the panel outcomes.

Each of the first three panels was convened at Georgetown University, the first in September 1989. Virginia's Mitchell Geasler; John Bottum, ES-USDA; and Michael Patton of Minnesota prepared the report summary.

That panel, comprised largely of academicians - or persons with strong ties to academia - identified 13 issues without priority. The issues they identified, in the order listed in the report, are:

Table 4

Criteria for Initiative Status

- Addresses major societal problems, real or perceived
- Has visibility/public awareness
- Politically feasible
- Marketable
- Timing is right
- Elicits an emotional response
- Generates CES commitment
- Research base exists
- Attracts financial resources
- Staff exists or can be obtained
- Extension can have impact within a specified time
- Important socioeconomic implications for Extension
- Extension can do a better job than anyone else
- Extension has a unique educational leadership role
- Extension has a critical catalytic role

- Shifting Demographic Distribution (the shrinking of the middle class accompanied by increases in the wealth and poor segments of the population);
- Troubled Youth (i.e. the complex problems of helping children become responsible adults);
- Society's Ability to Deal with the "Broken Self" (i.e. problems relating to low self-esteem);
- Facilitating Regeneration (the need for society to facilitate regeneration - "...biological as well as human and spiritual." [p. 2]).
- Sexism and Racism;
- Needs and Expectations of the Aging Population;
- Sustainability of Agriculture (i.e. "...a science-based, integrated management system of raising crops and livestock." [p.3]);
- Viable Rural Communities (i.e. helping rural communities to achieve and maintain demographic, social and economic strength);
- Globalization of the Economy (providing public policy education at the local level that is congruent with a global economy);
- The Education System (i.e. improving the quality of secondary education and revitalizing and modernizing land-grant universities);
- Future Environmental and Energy Considerations (dealing with the multiple facets of the long-term energy problem and solid waste disposal);
- Health and Wholesomeness of the Food Supply;
- Extension Organization and Programs.

The second futuring panel was convened only four months after the first. The second group was asked to address a question: "What are the emerging trends and issues that you are concerned about that a non-formal educational system needs to be prepared to address by 1995 to 2010?" Despite the more focussed nature of their deliberations, the issues identified by the second panel are strikingly parallel in many respects to those identified by the first group. Six specific issues were identified:

- Environment
- Energy
- Waste Disposal
- Revitalizing Rural America
- Food Safety
- Families

According to the panel report, prepared by Bottum and Patton, there was consensus within the group on some additional concerns which generated discussion but did not emerge as "issues." Those concerns included:

- Equity (i.e. in the economic, social, and political arenas in urban areas);
- University Resistance to Change (i.e. unwillingness or inability of the universities - by implication, land-grant universities - to respond to problems not consonant with the universities' preset agenda);
- Adaptive Research (echoing the concerns that surface in the 1986 OTA report, the panel's concern was that someone - Extension or a successor organization - be committed to doing the adaptive or applied research needed to move basic research findings into the realm of practical application);
- Timing (Panelists felt that education should begin when issues begin to emerge rather than waiting until they achieve crisis proportions);
- Extension's Role (Finding new methods to get people to change old ways, engaging the **total** land-grant university in problem-solving and internationalizing the curriculum were some of the needs panels saw having Extension implications. They specifically noted the need for Extension in the U.S. to forge and maintain linkages with Extension in Canada as well as the European community).

The focus of the third panel, convened in May 1990, was heavily weighted, by design, to urban issues. Though the issues this panel identified were somewhat broader, there again were obvious similarities to the issues identified by the previous panels. In the order listed in the report, the issues are:

- Racism and Other Social and Economic Divisions,
- Jobs and the Corporate (i.e. Formal and nonformal education opportunities to prepare people for increasingly specialized jobs was seen as the only alternative to high unemployment rates, especially in minority and poor communities.)
- Families (Chief concerns were the changing nature of the family "as a fundamental institution in our society" as evidenced by increasing numbers of single-parent and working mother families, and the need for nonformal education to teach parenting and related coping skills.)
- Education and Training (Collaboration between formal and nonformal education as well as between educational institutions, families and the private sector was seen as a need.)
- Environment, Ecology and Sustainability.

This panel also identified several additional issues that could be addressed through nonformal education, but did select them for in-depth discussion.

Health care, employment and jobs, care for dependents (both child care and dependent elderly), development of youth, the nations incarcerated population, and housing were the additional issues identified.

Salient outcomes from the first three panels are reflected in a March 1991 Strategic Planning Council report entitled "Patterns of Change." It would appear that the genesis of major issues at the outset of the 1990s is quite consistent with some of the "changes" that were shaping the environment for "Extension in the 80s."

Concerns at the outset of that decade were said to be changes in family patterns and roles, societal values and lifestyles, residential patterns, occupations, governmental systems, environmental concerns, and media and technology, along with others.

Nearly a decade later, the authors of "Patterns of Change" list seven "global and national trends" or "changedrivers:" globalization (i.e. social, economic, political interdependence of nations), information and technology explosion, environmental stewardship, the mosaic society, economic restructuring, changing institutions, and social issues, lifestyles and values.

There can be no denying that many of the "changedrivers" have been on the road a considerable length of time.

While the first three panels dealt with a broad range of topics, the fourth was asked to focus exclusively on agriculture issues.

Unlike the earlier panel sessions, the topic of agriculture was explored in a two-day gathering (April 23-37, 1991) involving both a panel and a forum. A 10-member futures panel met the first day with representatives of 34 agricultural, food, environmental, consumer and natural resource groups meeting the second day. According to a report on the gathering, prepared by Donald West and John Bottum of ES-USDA, there were 11 themes and issues addressed.

Economic and environmental concerns, maintaining the natural resource base while remaining competitive in global markets, concentration of resource ownership, and sustaining an agricultural sector compatible with societal values were a few of those themes/issues.

Three specific roles for Extension surfaced in the discussions: 1) developing leadership at the local level, 2) conducting public policy education "...particularly in the areas of biotechnology, food safety, and use of natural resources," and 3) playing a continuing role in technology transfer but cooperating "...to a greater extent with the research community, the private sector, and other agencies and groups." (West & Bottum, 1991)

The issues that the "Futuring Panels" have identified are extremely complex. Like virtually all problems confronting society today , a multifaceted approach will be needed to even begin approaching the problems - let alone finding solutions. It is also important to note that many of the issues (e.g. the environment, food safety, revitalizing rural America, etc.) already are integral parts of Extension's current programming efforts.

Analysis of the many issues also reveals that many of these issues have implications for interests at both the federal, state and local levels that go well beyond the linkages

traditionally maintained by Extension. Failure to maintain and utilize such linkages often has had a tendency to dilute Extension's effectiveness in addressing problems. To cite an example: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency obviously is principally responsible for environmental protection. It has been approximately two decades since that agency was established, but it has only been within the past few months (this very year, in fact) that a person has been appointed within USDA for formal liaison with EPA. It has only been within the past year or so that Extension has had liaison personnel at regional EPA offices - one in Region X, another in Region VII.

True, it can be argued that such formal linkages should not be necessary, that agencies should be able to interact and cooperate for the common good. That simply doesn't happen Extension is NOT a culprit in this situation; I want to emphasize this point. USDA agencies, by and large, are not particularly gregarious in the matter of even inter-USDA communications. It was precisely to counteract this propensity for insularity that the USDA's Presidential Water Quality Initiative projects were designed as interagency efforts (i.e. Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Soil Conservation Service, and Extension), and leadership for the various components - hydrologic unit area projects, demonstration projects, water quality special projects - was parcelled between those three entities.

Just as there must be effective, working linkages between cognizant federal agencies, Cooperative Extension also needs comprehensive, effective intra- and extrainstitutional linkages at the individual land grant university level. There are some notable exceptions such as Wisconsin, but in most instances Extension is organized as a subordinate unit of the College of Agriculture. At Nebraska, it is a division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Interdepartmental linkages and teamwork are obviously essentially in addressing any of Extension's present core and initiative programs. However, a well-established characteristic of academia is a certain parochialism that can tend to stifle even interdepartmental linkages.

In some cases, the resources of other colleges (business, engineering, arts and sciences) need to be focussed on a given issue. Securing commitment for the desired integration can become extremely problematic.

VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In the last section of this paper, I would like to explore briefly the question of vision for the future. This is no easy task since we don't have **A** vision for the future, but multiple visions. (And we need more than an ophthalmologist to sort them out!)

Certainly the General Accounting Office had a vision for Extension in 1981; it was that of an agency with a rather narrowly defined mission which would be submissively responsive to the agenda of the federal establishment.

In 1986 the Office of Technology Assessment envisioned an Extension System that actively helped shape research priorities and, by engaging in "adaptive research" was a partner in translating basic research findings into practical applications.

Extension's own future vision is somewhat Utopian. You will recall that in 1989, it was stated in a single sentence; two years later it was a full half-page of copy. The

system will be a future-oriented, self-renewing, national educational network. It will deliver interdisciplinary, programs of excellence focussed on critical, contemporary issues and needs of people. Its faculty and staff will be "sensitive, creative, flexible, forward looking," risk takers who are professionally competent. ("Patterns", pg vi)

That optimism contrasts sharply with the anticipations of observers such as Virginia's George McDowell. His address to agricultural program leaders when they met in Nashville this past spring was titled, "The USDA and The Extension System Revisited or If You Haven't Visited Extension Recently, You Better Do It Soon, Cause It Isn't Going To Be There Long." (McDowell, 1991)

There are others with decidedly more dispassionate views than either of these two extremes.

Dillman (1986) envisions an Extension driven by situational concerns associated with the ascendancy of "the information age. He, along with others (Gerber, 1990; McDowell, 1991) foresee the eventual replacement of agriculture as Extension's primary audience. He envisions that both the environment within which Extension will function and relationships with clientele will be shaped by information technology.

Minnesota's Michael Patton (1987a, 1987b) provides an operational vision of Extension. It will be composed of independent professionals working under contracts with land-grant universities. They would be flexibly organized into teams to address specific problems. Most would work out of their homes; county extension offices would be a thing of the past. Private agencies would operate programs after being developed by Extension. Federal funding would be sharply diminished and there would be variable levels of county funding; extension administrators would essentially be grant and contract administrators.

My own vision for Extension's future is cautiously optimistic. It's similar in some respects to those I've talked about, radically different in others.

I anticipate that there will be major shift in the organization and structure of Extension. I expect that by the year 2015 - give or take five years- Extension at the federal level will no longer be part of USDA. If not a self-standing agency of the executive branch, it will be a subunit of the U.S. Office of Education. It will have a core staff of professionals that is responsible for administration, congressional liaison and the other on-going necessities of organizational maintenance. Its operating staff - the DOERS - will be comprised of teams from throughout the federal establishment. USDA probably will be prominent among them still, along with EPA, Health and Human Services, and others. I expect this sort of change to occur very slowly for a couple of reasons. First, Extension, fundamentally is a strongly conservative organization, one that is not likely to make substantive changes very readily. Secondly, its organizational roots are in two fairly rigid bureaucracies - the U.S. Department of Agriculture and land grant universities. Both systems will resist organizational change until it absolutely can no longer be avoided.

When organizational change does occur, however, it will be pervasive. I would expect that when change does come, there will be a very strong regional structure and heavy emphasis on joint interstate/multistate programs. This will be possible - indeed, essential - because intense competition by manufacturers of technology will have

resulted in a vast array of highly sophisticated information exchange technology being generally available in the marketplace at affordable prices.

There will be a down-side to this development. The information processing resources will be in the hands of that segment of society that is socially and economically advantaged. The DISadvantaged will comprise an inordinately large percentage of the population.

As the first futuring panel noted, and recent newspaper articles have corroborated, there is a growing disparity in society between the "haves" and the "have nots." In-migration will be a significant factor in the increase of this latter cohort. We have seen in recent times large influxes of Southeast Asians: Vietnamese, Laotians, Cambodians. Large contingents from Caribbean and Latin American countries are even now creating problems in many southern and southwestern states. Inevitably, there will be an influx from Eastern Europe and what once was the USSR in the wake of upheavals there. I therefore expect that there will be increasing pressures on the federal establishment to be responsive to the needs of the disadvantaged. Of necessity, Extension will redefine its primary audience, at least by the year 2,005, to be the nation's economically and socially deprived.

Turning back momentarily to the regional Extension structure, research coordinating councils will be found at that level to foster interinstitutional research efforts and maximize the potential benefits of available resources - physical, fiscal and personnel. Extension will have substantive input in helping shape the research agenda.

Educational programs delivered simultaneously to multiple states will be the norm. It will not be unusual for Extension staff members to have interinstitutional appointments.

Within individual states, the Cooperative Extension organization and structure will largely mirror that at the federal level. Cooperative Extension will be organized as part of a Division of Life-long and Continuing Studies. Faculty from colleges throughout the university will form resource teams to address educational needs. Position descriptions of most faculty members will include the expectation that the individual contribute when appropriate to the university's outreach efforts. (A community leadership team might include a sociologist and a political scientist from Arts and Sciences, a management expert from the College of Business Administration, an urban law expert from the College of Law, etc.)

Extension will be working cooperatively with a variety of state departments and agencies on programs and initiatives of mutual interest and concern. Interagency Personnel Assignments will place Extension personnel in liaison roles in departments such as agriculture, environmental control, health, and economic development. Representatives of those agencies will routinely be asked for input in developing Extension programs.

County offices will have disappeared almost entirely. Extension field staff will be assigned throughout the state at strategically located Educational Resources Centers. Relatively few Extension programs will be delivered in face-to-face settings, but when necessary or desirable, they are presented at the ERC. Paraprofessionals and volunteers will have significant roles in delivering Extension programs.

One parting thought in conclusion. The viability of any publicly supported organization in this era of constrained budgets is directly dependent on impact. Decision makers are not going to be concerned that Extension has been a bulwark of agriculture for over 75 years. The question is, "What have you done for us lately?" We - Extension - must be able to produce tangible, incontrovertible evidence of accomplishment when that question is asked. Issues programming is certainly part of the answer. We need to address still further some critical basics: what issues? For whom are these issue a concern? How do we go about addressing them effectively? It is from the answers that a realistic vision of Extension's future will emerge. Unless and until we find those answers, all of our visions for Extension's future could be dimmed considerably.

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